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SUBJECT: DAS GRAFFY VISITS ARMENIA, EMPHASIZES ENGLISH LANGUAGE  
PROGRAMS AND MEDIA FREEDOM

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Summary  
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11. Summary: Deputy Assistant Secretary for Public Diplomacy in Europe and Eurasia Colleen Graffy visited Yerevan from December 12 - 14, 2008. DAS Graffy held fruitful discussions with Deputy Foreign Minister Arman Kirakossian and Ara Tadevosyan, Director of the NATO Information Center. She also addressed a wide range of important media freedom issues with two national television stations and one internet-based news source. During her visit, DAS Graffy met with American University of Armenia (AUA) Provost Dr. Lucig Danielian to discuss English language initiatives. She also met with several active alumni groups, visited museums reflecting Armenia's heritage, attended cultural events, and gave presentations on public diplomacy at the American Corner and Yerevan State Linguistic University. The visit was an important step in further developing English language programming and alumni relations in Armenia, and drew attention to the importance of balanced, open reporting in the press. End summary.

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Shaping the Government's Image Abroad  
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12. In the final stop of a three country regional trip, EUR DAS for Public Diplomacy Colleen Graffy visited Yerevan from December 12 - 14, 2008. The trip was her first visit to Armenia. DAS Graffy addressed a wide range of public diplomacy issues in her conversation with Deputy Foreign Minister Arman Kirakossian. The two agreed on the importance of linking policy with public diplomacy to explain government decisions and shape public perception abroad. Dr. Kirakossian stated that the GOAM understands policymakers need to be in tune with their public and noted that he intends to enhance public diplomacy efforts, especially by encouraging more interaction between government officials, NGO leaders and university representatives. DAS Graffy emphasized the need for officials to implement laws and policies that are in tune with society and communicate the society's culture and values to its citizens and the world. She also urged Dr. Kirakossian to consider media training opportunities for GOAM officials in order to communicate important policies and decisions.

13. Dr. Kirakossian said that the GOAM is employing technology to increase its transparency, noting that major GOAM decisions are being placed on the web and that the MFA is holding "Open Days" on Fridays for the interested public. DAS Graffy and Dr. Kirakossian also spoke about ways in which the U.S. and Armenian governments could further cooperate on cultural exchanges. Dr. Kirakossian expressed interest in developing an Armenian history exhibit for display in the U.S. and stated that cultural programming sponsored by the U.S. Embassy in Armenia has been excellent, noting that he especially enjoyed a September modern dance performance.

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U.S. Supporting NATO Center  
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14. At the NATO Information Center, DAS Graffy met with Director Ara Tadevosyan, who gave a tour of the facilities and discussed challenges and successes of the center. Tadevosyan noted that the majority of the furnishings were provided by the U.S. Embassy, and that PAS has assisted with coordinating NATO-funded trips for journalists. He discussed programming, highlighting NATO Week in Armenia, which showcased a U.S. Embassy sponsored DVC between Armenian troops in Kosovo and their families. When DAS Graffy

inquired about programming targeting youth, Tadevosyan noted that 90 percent of visitors to the center are young. DAS Graffy discussed media opportunities provided by the Brussels Media Hub and the possibility of developing a "Model NATO" program. Tadevosyan stated that there are currently 8 NATO member countries with representation in Armenia, and that the British Embassy will become the NATO Contact Point Embassy beginning in January. He intends to ask for 1,000 Euro from each NATO member country in order to supplement an annual 10,000 Euro stipend he receives from NATO to run the center.

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Media Freedom Stressed  
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¶5. DAS Graffy devoted significant time to highlighting the need for media freedom in Armenia during televised interviews with AR TV and Armenia TV, and in an interview with web-based media outlet A1 Plus.

During each interview, she discussed a general lack of diversity in the political viewpoints aired by the main broadcast media in Armenia and noted that, despite a relatively high number of outlets, there are no significant alternative sources of information. She noted the high degree of self-censorship in the Armenian media and A1 Plus's struggles to obtain a broadcasting license. She emphasized the need for true debate and diversity of viewpoints.

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English Language Programming a Priority  
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¶6. A meeting at AUA focused on engaging new audiences through English language initiatives, particularly those that use television and forms of "new media." The Provost, Dr. Lucig Danielian, stated that foreign language broadcasts are limited to 20 percent of a channel's content, with the exception of Russian language media. The strong preference is to dub foreign language programming into Armenian or Russian, including several popular series imported from the United States. Dr. Danielian expressed concern that while most Armenian families do not focus on formal Russian language instruction or emphasize Russian culture, most youth are learning the language because of the "ambiance" created by Russian language television in the home. She suggested that the same English language and American cultural immersion could be developed by AUA with assistance from the Embassy. (DAS Graffy discussed similar programming options with Armenia TV's Vahag Sargsian, emphasizing the benefit to English language learners of using Armenian subtitles instead of dubbing English language programs into Russian or Armenian. Sargsian noted that although Armenians are accustomed to dubbing, he would consider subtitling possibilities beginning with non-prime time hours).

¶7. DAS Graffy suggested to Dr. Danielian that programs such as "Connect with English" and "Crossroads Caf" could be offered on television at a low cost, and that a Memorandum of Understanding with the GOAM on English language broadcasting might be considered. She suggested that programming focus on youth and could include popular electronic games and text messaging an English "word of the day." DAS Graffy also inquired about the possibility of seeking out popular cultural figures for English language programming. Dr. Danielian stated that AUA has been a leader in the region on the development of English language programs and curricula, and that she looked forward to continuing to branch out into English language instruction through media and a potential public-private partnership that she is developing with the Embassy.

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Alumni, Students Express Gratitude  
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¶8. Three alumni groups had the opportunity to meet with DAS Graffy, including FLEX, U.S. Studies Institute, and Muskie fellows. The latter participate in a post-developed Public Service Fellowship Program, which provides incentives for alumni to seek employment in the public sector. All groups expressed their gratitude for U.S. Government support of exchange programs and the life-changing experiences they had while studying in the U.S. At a lunch hosted by the Ambassador, the Muskie fellows stated that the PSFP was an extra motivation for public service and an impetus to share knowledge and values obtained in the U.S. Alumni discussed their efforts to support reforms in their ministries and universities, making the point that "Your time in America impacts you. Like it or not, you become a driving element of positive change." Another

responded, "In the U.S., where opportunities are based on merit, you learn that if you want to do something - even in Armenia where so much is reliant on personal contacts - you can determine your own future."

¶9. DAS Graffy also interacted with students, professors and NGO leaders at two public lectures -- one at Yerevan State Linguistic University, the other at the American Corner -- where she discussed types of public diplomacy, answered questions, and took video of students talking about Armenia and the United States. She also spent time with PAS staff, visited two museums, attended an Embassy event highlighting USDA work with cheese producers, and saw a Turkish and Armenian cross cultural performance sponsored with USAID funds.

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Visit a Success  
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¶10. Reaction to the visit was very positive. Alumni expressed a renewed energy in developing programming and networking. Media interviews were well received and drew attention to the importance of balanced, open reporting. New media was also an important aspect of the trip. DAS Graffy "twittered" about her visit and posted pictures and video to YouTube and Flickr, which garnered additional awareness of public diplomacy efforts in Armenia. Most significantly, the visit was an important step in further developing English language programming in Armenia. The Embassy is actively working with AUA on English language initiatives and has discussed English language programming ideas with RELO Thomas Santos. PAS will promote the use of "Connect with English" for TV broadcast.

¶11. DAS Graffy has cleared this cable.

Yovanovitch